

RailAmerica Operations Support Group, Inc.



® A RailAmerica Company

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February 28, 2010

RE: Senate Bill 227, **AN ACT CONCERNING THE UNAUTHORIZED USE OF ALL-TERRAIN VEHICLES AND SNOWMOBILES**

Connecticut General Assembly

Dear Respected Members:

In reference to the above bill, I would like to call your attention to the serious safety and liability issues that unauthorized use of these types of vehicles have on the Connecticut railroad system.

RailAmerica, Inc. operates 40 shortline and regional railroads in the US and Canada. And we own and operate two Connecticut shortline freight railroads, the New England Central RR and the Connecticut Southern RR. We are members of the Connecticut Railroad Association. These two railroads operate over 120 miles of trackage and represent the largest volume of Connecticut rail freight handled. Operators that choose to illegally ride on railroad property are putting themselves, our employees, and the general public at great risk. They are trespassing on private property.

Operators trespassing on our right of way are putting themselves in danger by riding on our property. Our property is not designed or maintained to support safe operation of these types of vehicles. They are subject to being injured or killed by colliding with both freight and passenger trains, falling from bridges or embankments, and many other potential hazards. In addition, these trespassers present serious safety problems to our right of way infrastructure. The repeated use of these vehicles riding along the shoulders of our track causes severe erosion of the rock ballast sections. This ballast is put in place to hold the track structure (rail and ties) in place. As the steel rails heat up and cool down, they expand and contract. Without a proper ballast shoulder, the rails can "kink" and get out of gage and alignment. This can even happen under a passing train, without warning to the train crew. In the worst situations, this can cause the moving train to derail. Train derailments, either passenger or freight, are very serious and costly events.

Our railroads spend tens of thousands of dollars each year to dump new rock ballast and maintain our ballast shoulders to keep our tracks in safe operating condition. In addition, these trespassers are constantly vandalizing and removing "No Trespassing" signs. And yet, should a trespasser become injured, they may still attempt a legal challenge with the railroad.

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P. 2

Locations in Windsor, Suffield, East Hartford, Manchester, Willimantic, and South Windham have been especially effected by these trespassers.

I urge you to take this information to heart as you address this legislation.

Respectfully yours,

Charles D. Hunter
Director of State Relations- East